



Legislative Session 2001

Special Report & Update

17th District



From the desk of

Marc Boldt



Jim Dunn

Dear friends & neighbors,

Let's begin with the obvious: this past legislative session was simply too long. But here's something you may not know: we passed some very important legislation – legislation that is already making a difference for Washington families and communities.

For example, we passed a comprehensive energy package that is effectively dealing with the energy crisis that began over the winter. For the economy to stay strong we need reliable and affordable energy. This package combines common-sense conservation with an emphasis on generating new power in order to meet business and family needs.

We also made tremendous progress in the fight against meth labs. We worked hard to pass legislation that restricts the access of meth-makers to chemicals used to make the drug. Until the last meth lab in Clark and Skamania counties is eliminated, we will continue our fight against meth, and continue the fight to make our communities safe.

We are both concerned, however, about the state budget that passed (we both voted against it) and expect the Legislature will have to deal with the impact of the overspending in the next couple of years. We will continue to fight for sensible government that lives within its means and allows working families keep more of the money they earn and deserve to keep.

Lastly, a final solution to the transportation issue has not been reached. We discuss that in more detail in this newsletter.

We appreciate your support this session and appreciate all of the letters and e-mails we get from you. Keep in contact. If you have any questions about this past legislative session or need help working with a state agency, be sure to give either of us a call.

Please join us in our prayers for the rescue workers in New York and Washington DC, for our armed services, for our national leaders, for the grieving families, and for our nation.

Rep. Boldt's District Office is NOW OPEN! Come visit!

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Keeping Washington moving . . .

It's no secret that Washington is experiencing a growing transportation crisis. It's also no secret that Washington is experiencing a growing tax crisis. We are, even after the repeal of the motor vehicle excise tax, one of the 10 highest-taxed states in the nation (and we don't even have an income tax!).

We believe the state needs to make a significant new investment in our transportation system. We want to help get people out of traffic congestion and home to spend more time with their families. But even more important, we want to ensure when taxpayers make a bigger investment in transportation, that it will be a better investment than what they've gotten in the past. We will not support business as usual.

The most recent transportation funding proposal would have raised gas taxes, gross weight fees for trucks, diesel fuel taxes, and sales taxes on vehicles to generate approximately \$6 billion over the next decade to pay for a bonding package that would total roughly \$8.6 billion in projects.

Over that same time – 10 years – the state will already be collecting more than \$300 billion in taxes (adjusting for inflation). Instead of raising taxes on working families and individuals living on fixed incomes, why don't we change the way government does business? Why don't we look for ways to save that \$6 billion over the next ten years – especially since that comes to just 2 percent of the total our state will collect during that time?

By dedicating those modest savings to transportation, we could fully fund this massive transportation "fix" without raising taxes!

It is possible to get a better return on the investment taxpayers already make in state government – and we can indeed fund Washington's most pressing transportation needs without raising your taxes.

Concerns about the state budget...

The two-year state operating budget covers general services, including education, social services and natural resources but does not include transportation or construction of government buildings. After six months of negotiating, the operating budget written by the Senate Democrats was passed and we both voted against it.

The state operating budget contains many items that we are concerned about. But the bottom line is that this budget spends more than we can afford, and will eventually require tax increases, real budget cuts to existing services, or both.

This Democrat budget plan, at \$22.8 billion, spends \$667 million more than expected revenue. This will leave the state's general fund nearly \$680 million in the red within two years.

Our other big concern is that the Democrats' plan uses \$668 million in "one-time" money that pays for ongoing programs. This one-time money comes from reserves and pension funds that will not be there for future budgets. When the money runs out, the only way to keep these programs going will be to raise taxes.

This budget is not good government. It puts important state programs at risk. It risks a tax increase. And puts our state economy at risk. Tough decisions will have to be made eventually. And when the time comes, lawmakers will have to decide whether they are willing to raise taxes or cut programs.

Protecting tax fairness for Washingtonians ...

A top priority for me this session was legislation seeking fair tax treatment of Washington residents who work in Oregon. My bill, House Joint Memorial 4010, asked the Oregon Legislature to reduce income taxes on Washington residents who work in Oregon to a level that is commensurate with the state services received by Washington residents.

Right now, Washington residents are being taxed for state services they don't receive, and that is obviously not fair. Oregon imposes a personal income tax to finance state government, which makes up about 85 percent of the state's general fund. Oregon's income tax applies to all the income of nonresidents from Oregon sources.

But the Washington residents who work in Oregon don't receive any social services from the state of Oregon and their children don't attend school there, yet they are taxed for it.

For the 1998 tax year, Washington residents each paid an average of \$1,655 in Oregon personal income tax -- or more than \$130 million in all.



Rep. Dunn address the Trade and Economic Development Committee.

Special Report & Update

Helping foster kids in transition...

Children in foster care are among the most vulnerable citizens in society, and the foster parents who care for them are our community's unsung heroes. I sponsored several bills this session to ensure young people in the foster care system are treated with dignity and respect and to provide foster parents with the tools they need to offer a stable environment for the kids in their care.

Many children remain in the foster care system until they turn 18 and no longer are wards of the state -- being sent into the adult world with little family and no guidance. Not surprisingly these young adults find it difficult to find a place to live and work.

I co-sponsored **House Bill 1259**, recently signed into law by the governor, to help ease young adults out of the foster care system and into society. It allows the Department of Social and Health Services to provide a range of services to teens who turned 18 while in foster care. Assistance includes helping them complete their high school education or vocational education, as well as provide training in money management, nutrition and goal setting.



House Children and Family Services Committee co-chair, Rep. Marc Boldt, listens to public testimony.

Strengthening foster parent rights...

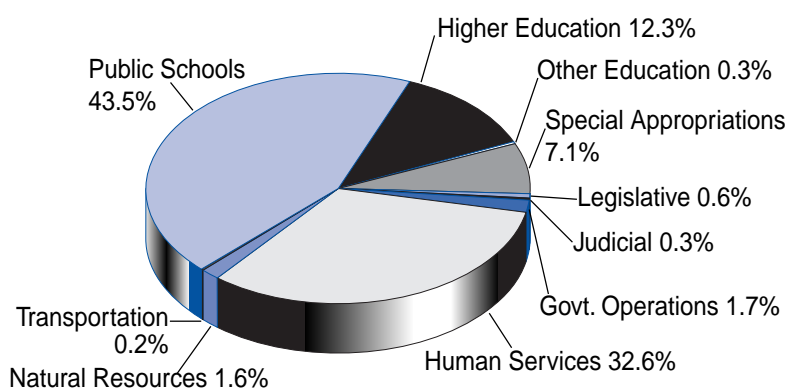
Foster parents provide a caring home environment and serve as a voice for those who are not always heard. To strengthen the role of foster parents in advocating for their foster children, I sponsored **House Bill 1102**. It allows foster parents to be active participants in planning for family visitation, as well as monitoring and modeling effective parenting behavior. **Although it passed the Legislature with widespread support, the governor vetoed the section explicitly prohibiting DSHS employees from retaliating against foster parents.**

This legislation puts safeguards in place to ensure foster children have an advocate with tools to look out for their needs without fear of reprisal. Unfortunately, many foster parents have reported that they faced retaliation from the DSHS when they disagreed with a case plan or sought to be more actively involved in planning for family visitation.

I believe dedicated foster parents in our state deserve not only our gratitude, but also our support. I am deeply disappointed that the governor vetoed the enforcement component of this legislation. I will continue to work to ensure they can continue to advocate for our most vulnerable youth without worrying about becoming a victim of retaliation.



Where Your State Tax Dollars Are Spent



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Community Economic Revitalization Board
Governor's Small Business Improvement Council

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Committees

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Children's Legislative Oversight Committee
Family Policy Council

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